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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 IO-13 HA-05 PC-01 AID-05
/122 W
----------118607 140612Z /20
R 121752Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5300
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 07919

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, MR, SP
SUBJECT: GOS VIEWS ON COUP IN MAURITANIA

REF: 1. NOUAKCHOTT 1880, 2. MADRID 7778 (NOTAL)

1. IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH ADCM ABOUT RECENT EVENTS IN MAURITANIA THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL (EQUIVALENT OF ASST SEC) FOR AFRICA AND CONTINENTAL ASIA, PEDRO LOPEZ AGUIRREBENGOA (WHO SERVED IN NOUAKCHOTT 1965-67), SAID THAT HE SAW THE COUP AS A REAFFIRMATION OF MAURITANIAN IDENTITY AND AN EXPRESSION OF A DETERMINATION TO CONFRONT HEAD ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND MILITARY PROBLEMS. WHILE THE NEW LEADERSHIP, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, SEEMED LARGELY CONSERVATIVE, HE SAID, THE COUP SEEMED TO HIM NATIONALIST IN NATURE AND PURPOSE, AND IT WAS NOT TO BE ASSUMED THAT AN ANTI-ALGERIAN, ANTI-POLISARIO POSTURE WOULD NECESSARILY BE THE SAME AS A PRO-MOROCCO ONE, ESPECIALLY ONCE THE INITIAL POSTT
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COUP STAGE HAD PASSED. AT LEAST SOME MAURITANIAN MILITARY LEADERS WERE UNDERSTANDABLY RESENTFUL OF THE SUBSTANTIAL MOROCCAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THEIR COUNTRY, HE SAID.

2. LOPEZ SAW TWO PRINCIPAL DANGERS FACING THE NEW GOVERNMENT. ONE WAS THAT THE PRO-MOROCCO PROFILE

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IT SEEMED TO HAVE ADOPTED SO FAR WOULD PERSIST, LEADING ALGERIA TO REACT BY "HEATING THINGS UP" IN THE REGION AND THUS PUTTING ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON MAURITANIA. ON THE INTERNAL PLANE, THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE PARTY MEANT THAT THE SECOND OF THE ONLY TWO FACTORS OF NATIONAL AGGLUTINATION (THE OTHER BEING OULD DADDAH HIMSELF) HAD BEEN REMOVED, RAISING THE DANGER OF AN EXACERBATION OF THE COUNTRY'S TRIBAL AND RACIAL CENTRIFUGAL FORCES. IN THE SAME VEIN, LOPEZ EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE TALK OF DEMOCRACY WITH ITS IMPLICATION OF PLURALISM, FOR PLURALISM IN MAURITANIA, HE SAID, WOULD MEAN EACH FRACTIONAL ELEMENT WOULD HAVE ITS OWN PARTY, FURTHER STIMULATION NATIONAL DISAGGREGATION AND OPENING THE WAY FOR ALGERIAN EXPLOITATION OF INTERNAL DIFFERENCES.

3. IN SUM, SAID LOPEZ, HE FELT THAT BALANCE WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAURITANIA IN ITS NEW PHASE, PARTICULARLY BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. HE HOPED THAT THOSE WITH INFLUENCE, INCLUDING THE US, WOULD BE COUNSELING MAURITANIA ALONG THOSE LINES.

4. COMMENT: LOPEZ IS ONE OF OUR PRIME CONTACTS AND THE SPANISH ARE, OF COURSE, INTENSELY INTERESTED IN MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS. WE WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S AND NOUAKCHOTT'S COMMENTS ON CONFIDENTIAL

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LOPEZ' ANALYSIS AND ANY OTHER INFORMATION WE COULD PASS TO HIM BEARING ON MAURITANIA AND THE SAHARA.
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